The Mock Trial Board is a student-run organization that seeks to promote the engagement of students in mock trial competitions at both the intra and interscholastic levels and, in doing so, to promote the practical development of aspiring lawyers at Duke Law. The Board is composed of approximately thirty-five students selected through a competition held during the spring semester. This past spring, more than sixty students participated in the competition and the top twenty performers were extended invitations to join the Board. During their tenure on the Board, each member is required either to serve as an officer or to compete in an interscholastic competition. The Board is led by an executive board composed of a president, vice president, treasurer, two intrascholastic tournament co-chairs, and an interscholastic competition coordinator.

The Mock Trial Board promotes the development of trial advocacy skills by hosting the intrascholastic mock trial competition open to all first-year and second-year Duke Law students and by sending members to compete nationally against teams from other law schools. The Board plans to send teams to at least four national competitions each year. Teams representing law schools all over the country compete at these competitions. Over the past few years, our teams have competed at the American Trial Lawyers Association (ATLA) competition, the Texas Young Lawyers Association (TYLA) competition, and the ABA Criminal Justice Section invitational competition. This year teams will also compete at the National White Collar Crime invitational competition and the National Animal Advocacy Closing Argument competition.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is a Mock Trial?

A mock trial simulates a trial level proceeding. Students form teams and portray both lawyers and witnesses. Each team is given an identical set of facts, witness depositions, and a limited number of evidentiary rules. They then present opening statements, direct and cross examinations, and closing arguments. Performance may be judged by a combination of students, professors, practicing attorneys, and judges.

2. What’s the difference between Mock Trial and Moot Court?

While mock trial simulates the trial level proceeding, moot court simulates the appellate level proceeding. Among other differences, mock trial involves witness testimony, with statements and arguments directed to a jury, whereas moot court involves attorneys making arguments to, and answering questions directly from, a panel of judges only. Many students participate in both the Mock Trial and Moot Court student organizations; they are not mutually exclusive.

3. Is it useful for students who don’t want to be litigators?

Absolutely! No matter what area of law you want to work in, your job will entail understanding your audience and communicating your message accordingly. The skills you develop in mock trial will help develop the confidence and ability to do this well.